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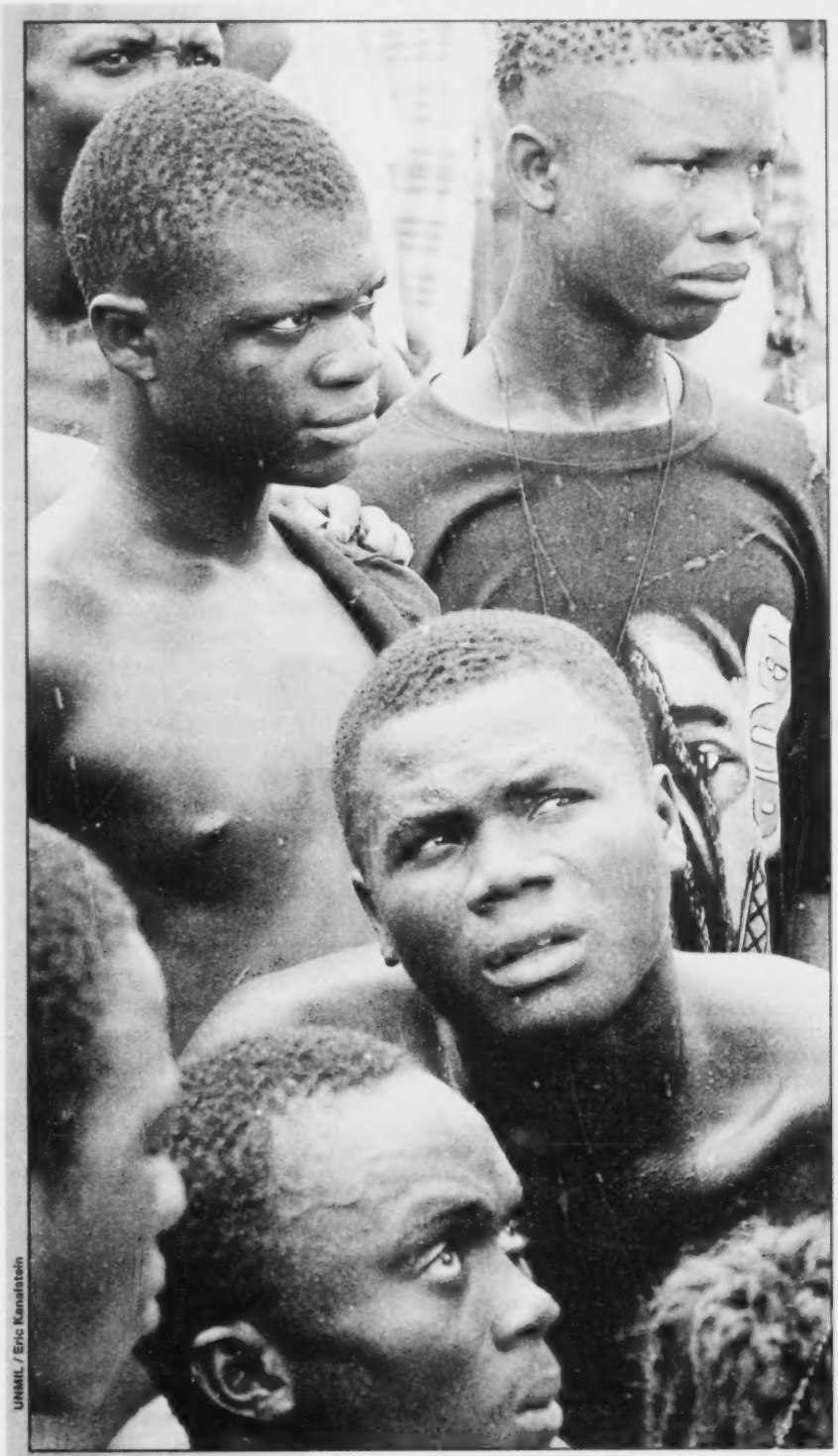

UNMIL / Eric Kanalstein

African migration: *from tensions to solutions*

By **Gumisai Mutume**

Sometimes, for months on end, young African men and women risk everything, including their lives, to take on the perilous trip across dozens of borders and the treacherous waves of the Mediterranean Sea in search of a better life in the North. Some die along the way, some are turned back and some who finish the journey realize that life may not be easier across the frontier. But with few jobs and dim prospects at home, millions of youths and young adults in Africa still choose to migrate, often clandestinely.

Such movements of people pose difficult questions for many governments and for the international community. One of the most pressing concerns of

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AFRICA RENEWAL

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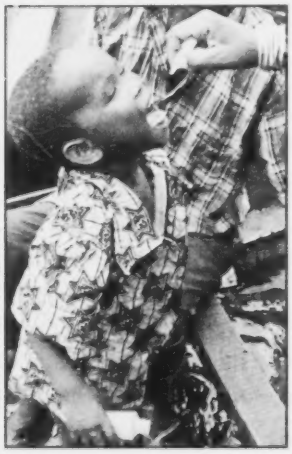

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Immunization against polio has virtually wiped out the disease in industrialized countries, while it remains a menace to Africa. The continent accounts for 75 per of polio cases reported worldwide.

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Associated Press / Jasper Juinen

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Progress in Zimbabwe's HIV/AIDS battle

Prevention campaigns show results

By **Michael Fleshman**

An AIDS worker distributing free condoms in Mutare, Zimbabwe. Behavioural changes have contributed to declining infection rates in the country.

Despite serious economic and political challenges, Zimbabwe has become only the second country in sub-Saharan Africa to significantly slow the spread of HIV, the human immunodeficiency virus that causes AIDS. In a brief press statement on 10 October, the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) announced that infection rates among a particularly vulnerable group — pregnant women — declined from 24.6 per cent in 2002 to 21.3 per cent in 2004.

The findings are good news in a country with one of the highest HIV infection rates in the world. It is an indication, UNAIDS Advocacy, Communication and Leadership Director Achmat Dangor said, that education and prevention programmes launched during the 1990s are beginning to show results. "For us," he noted, "that is very significant."

During an exclusive interview with *Africa Renewal* in New York in late October, Mr. Dangor, a noted South African novelist and former head of the Nelson Mandela Foundation, also reported that infection rates among young people, another group at high risk, have dropped even further, from about 25 to 20 per cent.

Despite the impressive progress, he cautioned, "this is no reason for complacency. Zimbabwe still has one of the highest HIV prevalence rates in the world." The challenge now, he said, is to build on those gains.

Pinpointing the causes

Zimbabwe is only the second African country, after Uganda, to reduce very high HIV rates through education and prevention. Continued reductions in Zimbabwe, which is at the geographic and epidemiological centre of the AIDS pandemic in Africa, could mark a turning point in the struggle against the disease and offer valuable lessons to other countries in the region.

Given the difficult circumstances in Zimbabwe, Mr. Dangor said, when evidence of a decline in new infections began to arrive, "we were skeptical at first." UNAIDS commissioned the Imperial College in London to review data from a wide variety of sources — including government reports and research by the US Centres for Disease Control — to confirm that there had been a real fall in infections, rather than an increase in mortality rates or some other statistical quirk.

"All reviews tell us that mortality does play a role [in prevalence rates], but that level of decline cannot be accounted for by outward migration or mortality," he asserted. "The death rate would have had to quadruple, in fact," to be the sole cause of the decline. The challenge now is to find out what aspects of Zimbabwe's anti-AIDS programme are responsible for the improvements. "At this stage we cannot pinpoint what the scientists call the 'specific programme interventions'" behind the decline, he explained. "We are now looking at the major programmes, governmental and non-governmental, urban and rural, to see if we can identify them."

Ideology out, ownership in

Early analysis suggests that behavioural changes, including young people waiting longer before becoming sexually active, fewer casual sex partners and increased use of condoms, are parts of the explanation. But Mr. Dangor also pointed out that Zimbabwe's strong education system, its emphasis on district and community management of AIDS programmes and improvements in the status of women since independence in 1980 could also be factors.

"We have ABC," he said, referring to Uganda's successful Abstain, Be faithful or use a Condom campaign. "If I could add another letter it would be 'W' for women, because we will never defeat AIDS in Africa until we empower the women. These things must become embedded in every activity of government at every level."

The country's progress cannot be explained by an abundance of external resources. Neighbouring Zambia received $187 in aid for every HIV-positive citizen in 2004, whereas Zimbabwe's strained relations with some donors meant that it received just $4 per person.

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Liberian woman breaks the 'glass ceiling'

Ambitious agenda for President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf

By **Ernest Harsch**

The election of Ms. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf as the new president of Liberia stands as a double landmark. The event signalled an important step in the West African nation's transition to peace after 14 years of civil war; it also marked the first time that a woman was elected to the highest political office anywhere in Africa.

The only woman among 22 presidential candidates in the first round of the elections in October, Ms. Johnson-Sirleaf ultimately beat out all her competitors. Those included the popular former soccer star George Weah, whom she surpassed by a comfortable margin in the second round on 8 November, with 59 per cent of the vote to Mr. Weah's 41 per cent.

"We have shattered the glass ceiling," Ms. Johnson-Sirleaf told her jubilant supporters, referring to the barrier of gender discrimination that has often kept women from attaining high office. "And I hope women will seize the moment to become active in civil and political affairs."

Femmes Africa Solidarité, a non-governmental network that works mainly in war-torn African countries, hailed the election as "a major leap forward in the struggle for equal participation in decision-making." Ms. Kofo Laja-Olugbesan, a leader of the Nigerian women's association Target 2007, declared that "this is one moment in history we had all longed and hoped for."

Campaigning on her merits

Although Ms. Johnson-Sirleaf made specific appeals to Liberian women voters, her campaign addressed a broad range of issues. These included fighting corruption, ensuring security, achieving national unity and reconciliation, and spurring post-war economic recovery.

In appealing for votes, Ms. Johnson-Sirleaf highlighted her skills and extensive experience. In the 1970s she served as deputy finance minister. After Sergeant Samuel Doe staged a coup in 1980, she left the country for several years to work as a loan officer for the World Bank and as a CitiBank director in Nairobi.

When she returned home in 1985, President Doe promptly placed her under

UN Photo/Mark Garten

house arrest for her criticisms of his repressive rule. Compelled once again to go into exile, she took high-level jobs in a number of banking and investment institutions. In 1992 she was appointed director of the UN Development Programme's Regional Bureau for Africa, a position she held for five years.

Meanwhile in Liberia, President Doe was killed and the country descended into a multisided civil war. In 1997, when a tentative peace accord called for elections, Ms. Johnson-Sirleaf returned to campaign for the presidency. Although she lost, she was the main challenger to Charles Taylor, the strongest of the warlords.

President Taylor's dictatorial methods eventually led to renewed civil war. Ms. Johnson-Sirleaf participated in various initiatives to end that war, while also putting her experience in conflict resolution to use elsewhere. She was one of seven eminent persons appointed by the Organization of African Unity in 1999 to investigate the Rwanda genocide, she helped chair a dialogue among political currents in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2002 and that same year she helped author a report by the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) on women's roles in building peace.

In 2003, under tremendous domestic and international pressure, President Taylor left Liberia, easing the way to a comprehensive peace agreement. A UN peacekeeping mission oversaw demobilization of the armed factions and supported Liberians' efforts to organize free and fair elections. In congratulating Ms. Johnson-Sirleaf on her victory, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan vowed that the UN would continue to support Liberia's efforts to achieve lasting peace and development.

A daunting agenda

The tasks facing her new government, which takes office in mid-January, will be "awesome," Ms. Johnson-Sirleaf told *UNMIL Focus*, a magazine of the UN peacekeeping mission. "There's hardly anything you can think of that's not a priority in the country."

Liberia must be rebuilt. "We will work to create jobs," Ms. Johnson-Sirleaf has pledged. "We will help our farmers return to the land and grow food for self-sufficiency. We will work to improve social conditions, including the restoration of electricity and water services."

Above all, she has said, there must be national reconciliation and the consolidation of peace. Achieving those goals will involve ensuring security for ordinary Liberians. They also will entail easing the political tensions that flared during the election, when supporters of Mr. Weah took to the streets to protest his loss.

Ms. Johnson-Sirleaf has vowed to establish a "government of inclusion" that is transparent and honest, reflects all viewpoints and encourages decentralized decision-making. "Never again in this nation," she has said, "shall a person or group of persons feel so excluded that they have to resort to violence in the name of justice." ■

Communities mobilize to protect Liberian peace

Collecting small arms to forestall renewed violence

By **Ernest Harsch,** *Monrovia*

More than two years after the official end of Liberia's civil war, its weapons are still fueling instability. The new Liberian national police, often aided by peacekeepers from the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), sweep through Monrovia neighbourhoods or descend on villages to seize arms.

So far, there is not a serious threat of armed criminal activity or a resumption of political violence, given the "overwhelming dominance" of the peacekeeping mission, acknowledges Mr. Napoleon Abdullai, a small-arms adviser with the UN Development Programme (UNDP). But unless many of these arms are gathered and destroyed, once UNMIL begins to scale down, "the problem of armed violence and criminality will come up," he told *Africa Renewal* at UNDP's Monrovia offices.

The factors that could jeopardize the country's hard-won peace were evident in the tensions surrounding Liberia's recent elections. The presence of large numbers of unemployed and angry youths — some of them former combatants — makes the situation especially volatile.

Mr. Abdullai recalls that neighbouring Sierra Leone experienced an upsurge in criminal violence in the aftermath of its own civil war. In fact, untold numbers of small arms and light weapons are circulating throughout West Africa. When war ends in one country, uncollected weapons often flow across borders "to hot conflict zones," he observes. To stem such flows, the 15 countries of the Economic Community of West African States are working to transform a voluntary moratorium on making and trading in light weapons into a legally binding treaty.

Some guns, mortars and other weapons from Liberia have already been acquired by armed factions in neighbouring Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea. Early in 2005, police in faraway Bamako, Mali, seized a vehicle full of arms driven up from Liberia.

Arms for development

So for the sake of Liberia's own future and that of its neighbours, collecting and destroying weapons has continued beyond the December 2004 conclusion of UNMIL's formal disarmament programme. According to a recent report by the Small Arms Survey, an independent research project based in Geneva, only 27,800 weapons were collected from the 102,000 ex-combatants who were demobilized.

To help mop up the leftover weapons, a community arms-collection operation has been launched, with support from UNDP, as part of a broader "arms for development" programme for countries emerging from conflict. The operation is modeled, in part, on the Community Arms Collection and Destruction programme initiated in Sierra Leone in 2001, in which the police, assisted by UN peacekeepers, helped local communities collect thousands of arms from civilians.

The first steps toward a similar effort in Liberia have begun in Lofa, Nimba, Grand Gedeh and Bong counties. In addition to running campaigns to educate the public on the dangers of small arms, UNDP helps establish District Development Committees (DDCs). These committees, which include government officials, civil-society representatives and private individuals, gather information on local arms caches and alert the police and UNMIL to collect them.

Clinics and solar panels

Once the weapons have been gathered, the police certify that district to be "weapons free." The DDC can then approach UNDP with its priority needs. "UNDP will provide the cash and technical support for health clinics, sports fields, rural feeder roads, whatever they want," Mr. Abdullai explains. Even if there is no request for electricity, UNDP will supply solar panels for community halls so that residents have someplace to gather in the evenings.

UNDP has approached donors for funding to extend the project for another five years, beyond its first year. It also aims to expand the effort to other counties.

To ensure that districts remain weapons free, the project will promote "community policing" to supplement the efforts of the national police, who cannot be everywhere. Community policing will include training elders, youths, women and other residents in basic intelligence skills, so that any arms entering or passing through the district are more easily detected. ■

UN centre combats arms proliferation

Often operating outside the limelight, the UN Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, headquartered in Lomé, Togo, has for nearly two decades been helping the continent combat arms proliferation. Through research and training programmes, it supports the efforts of national governments and the UN, African Union and other organizations to reduce local arms production and trafficking, which often contribute to the continent's numerous wars and conflicts.

Small arms and light weapons are a particular threat, notes Mr. Ivor Richard Fung, the centre director, since these "can be more easily obtained by individuals and groups than heavy weapons." In late 2003, the centre launched a pilot project to help build national capacities to combat small-arms proliferation in 10 countries (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Djibouti, Gabon, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, South Africa and Togo). UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan reported in July 2005, however, that a decline in overall contributions to the centre has caused a "financial crisis." He urged a thorough review of the centre's activities and funding sources.

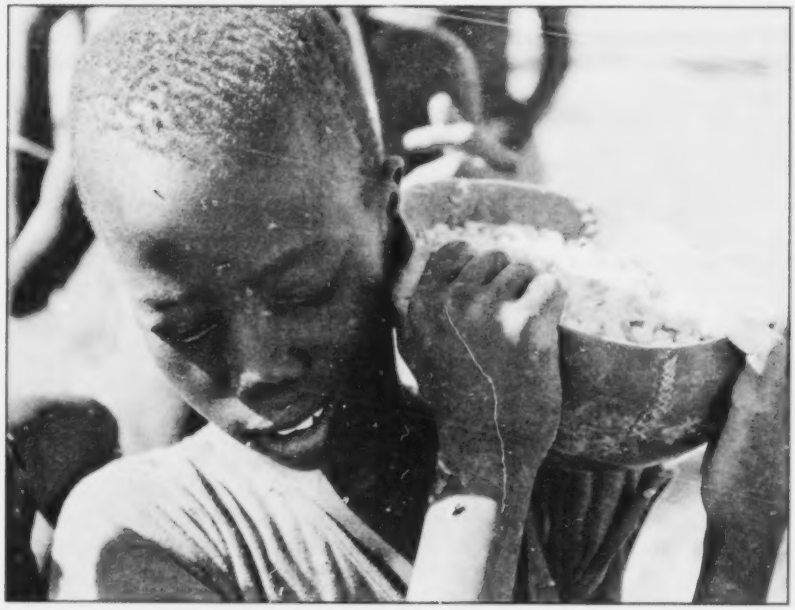
Fixing the humanitarian aid system

UN, relief groups seek to bolster and speed up food delivery

By **Michael Fleshman**

Is there something wrong with the way the world responds to famines, earthquakes and floods? Ask Josephine Kachebe. The 83-year-old grandmother from Tiki Mwiinga community in southern Zambia is among 12 million Southern Africans in desperate need of emergency food aid, according to estimates of the World Food Programme (WFP). In June 2005 the agency appealed for enough food to feed the region through the April 2006 harvest.

But five hungry months later, only a fraction of the target had been met.



International food relief often arrives too late — after the hungry have begun to die in large numbers.

In November, Mrs. Kachebe told WFP investigators that her only meal that day had consisted of scavenged seed pods, wild nuts and tree roots, which she mixed with ashes into a bitter gruel. The day before, she admitted, she had eaten nothing. If help ever does arrive, she said, "I think it will be too late. I will be dead."

Cruelly, Mrs. Kachebe's death — and those of thousands of her friends and neighbours — may be what it takes to spur the world into action. Too often, WFP Executive Director James T. Morris told a US audience in August, donors ignore warnings until the images of the starving appear on television screens. Only then are purse strings loosened and life-sustaining aid sent to the survivors.

"We simply cannot wait until our televisions beam these devastating images into our living rooms to take action," Mr. Morris declared. "When the warning bell is sounded about imminent disaster ... we must listen and act."

Fixing the global humanitarian emergency response system and anchoring it more firmly in long-term development goals is an important part of Secretary-General Kofi Annan's plan for UN reform. It is also a moral obligation. With 2005 bracketed by two of the worst natural catastrophes in recent years — the Indian Ocean tsunami and the devastating earthquake in Pakistan — and with famine deepening in West and Southern Africa, efforts to make the system more responsive, more consistent and more effective could mean life or death for millions of future disaster victims.

Africa's long-term plan, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), argues that the continent's widespread hunger and food insecurity can ultimately be eradicated only if local agricultural production is strengthened and rural living standards are raised. But in the short term, especially when countries are hit by famine or some other disaster, adds NEPAD's Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme, "rapid humanitarian interventions followed by rehabilitation are required before normal development can resume."

Too little, too late

Although there is a vigorous debate among relief workers, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and donors about how to improve emergency services, there is general agreement that the current system does not facilitate rapid responses and fails to generate adequate resources. As Oxfam International noted in a recent study, emergency aid "still does not cover all needs. It often arrives late and is determined more by media profile or political criteria than humanitarian need."

Part of the problem is money. Although the UN established a $50 mn cash reserve for disaster relief known as the Central Emergency Revolving Fund (CERF) in 1991, it has been hampered by a requirement that agencies like WFP or the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) obtain donor pledges of reimbursement before CERF funds can be released. For countries like famine-stricken Niger (see *Africa Renewal*, October 2005), finding donors can take months — slowing the arrival of assistance and increasing human suffering.

Another mechanism, the Consolidated Appeal Process, was also set up in 1991 to alert donors to emergencies and mobilize resources rapidly. Operated by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the

system issues "flash" appeals for sudden crises. But there too the response from donors has been uneven. In a 20 October report to the General Assembly, Mr. Annan reported that flash appeals generate on average just 16 per cent of requested funds.

"Imagine if your local fire department had to petition the mayor for money every time it needed water to douse a raging fire," UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Jan Egeland noted in early 2005. "That's the predicament faced by anguished humanitarian aid workers when they seek to save lives but have no funds to pay for the water — or medicine, shelter or food — needed to put out a fire.... These delays are deadly."

Fixing the global humanitarian emergency response system and anchoring it more firmly in long-term development goals is an important part of Secretary-General Kofi Annan's plan for UN reform. It is also a moral obligation.

Politics too plays a role in determining the size and direction of humanitarian flows. During the Cold War, noted a 2001 study by the UK's independent Overseas Development Institute, aid was used by both sides to build alliances, reward allies and punish opponents. The end of the Cold War also ended the strategic importance to the North of some developing countries, including many in Africa. This in turn eroded these countries' influence with donors.

"Humanitarian assistance has always been a highly political activity," the study asserted. "It has always influenced the political economy of recipient countries, and has always been influenced by the political considerations of donors.... Stark differences between the amount and type of humanitarian assistance given to various countries facing acute crises show that humanitarian aid has never been disbursed solely on the basis of need."

The statistics bear out that grim conclusion. In June Mr. Morris of the WFP told the Security Council that urgent appeals for African countries in crisis attracted just a fraction of the needed resources, in contrast to the overwhelming response to the tsunami disaster. Only 17 per cent of requirements for the flood-stricken Central African Republic had been received, while appeals for the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Côte d'Ivoire attracted just 35 and 30 per cent, respectively.

"Occasionally," Mr. Morris told the council, "I have thought the worst place for a hungry child to live in Africa today is a country that is at peace with its neighbours and relatively stable. Funding levels rise with the incidence of violence and media interest.... In our view there are few phenomena in modern life as political as humanitarian aid."

A deadly 'lottery'

Television and press coverage are sometimes the only means of prodding donor governments into action, but there is no guarantee that the media will focus on any given crisis situation or that press attention will stimulate contributions. It is almost a given, however, that the cameras will arrive only in time to record the dying — not in time to prevent a looming crisis.

Mr. Egeland likened the situation to a "lottery," in which victims of disaster vie for the media attention needed to attract the support of fickle donor governments. "You have 25 equally desperate communities playing in this lottery for attention every week," he told the *Columbia Journalism Review* in July. "Twenty four lose and one wins." In 2005, he noted, the survivors of the Indian Ocean tsunami and the humanitarian crisis in western Sudan received massive media coverage and generous support. The victims of conflicts in northern Uganda and eastern DRC, however, "are among the losers of our attention lottery. I find it in a way incomprehensible because in terms of drama, needs, cruelty, human touch and heroic efforts to help, the situations are on a par."

Reforming the Fund

Addressing these flaws in the humanitarian emergency response system feature prominently in Mr. Annan's blueprint for reform of the UN, *In Larger Freedom*, released in advance of the 14–16 September World Summit (see *Africa Renewal*, October 2005). His detailed proposals, submitted to the General Assembly in October, amount to a fundamental overhaul of the CERF, including:

- a ten-fold increase in funding, to $500 mn. within three years
- restructuring to provide all but $50 mn as grants instead of revolving loans
- the earmarking of two-thirds of these grants for early interventions and rapid response programmes
- the ability to release funds within 72–96 hours
- the reservation of up to a third of annual disbursements for the urgent needs of under-financed humanitarian operations.

The revamped CERF, renamed the Central Emergency Response Fund, would in effect free aid workers from their case-by-case dependency on donors, enabling humanitarian agencies to respond to natural disasters within days, rather than weeks or months, permitting them to respond to early signs in order to avert full-blown emergencies. This rapid-reaction capacity will save lives, relief workers say, and also money. The months-long delay in responding to the famine in Niger, for example, both increased demand for costly intensive-care services and forced the WFP to use aircraft for food shipments instead of slower, but less expensive, sea and land transportation.

Funds will also be used to pay for vital needs not covered by specific donor contributions, including activities such as spraying against mosquitoes at breeding time or purchasing seeds and fertilizer during planting season. In many under-funded emergencies, Mr. Annan's report noted, donors may fund only some programmes, such as child feeding centres, while ignoring equally vital services, such as providing clean water, medical care or shelter.

Niger again provides a graphic example of how inadequacies in the system can worsen a local emergency. A major cause of malnutrition in Niger was the damage done to pastures by locusts in 2004. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization failed to find donor funding for a programme to eradicate the locusts, allowing

them to spread and tipping parts of the country into crisis.

The reform proposals have attracted strong support from donor governments, NGOs and relief agencies, along with pledges approaching $200 mn by end-2005. Norwegian Ambassador Mona Juul, in announcing a contribution of over $29 mn in November, told the General Assembly that her government welcomed bolstering the CERF because it would permit the UN to "quickly respond to — and possibly prevent — crises like the one in Southern Africa."

The US, by far the largest single contributor of humanitarian aid, also endorsed the expanded CERF. Mr. Sichan Siv, a deputy US representative to the UN, welcomed the initiative in November, noting that "a centralized source of rapidly available funding could help effectively address urgent needs in rapid-onset emergencies and swiftly deteriorating crises." Although the US has not yet made a contribution to the fund, US mission spokesperson Benjamin Chang told *Africa Renewal* that "this simply reflects our budget process, not any reservations" about the fund.

According to OCHA officials, over 80 per cent of the pledges represent new commitments, allaying concerns that CERF would drain money from existing programmes. The fund is expected to begin operating early in 2006.

Money or maize?

There are other proposals to reform the delivery of emergency aid. A 2005 study by the industrialized countries' Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) called for donating cash rather than commodities (wheat, maize, cooking oil), which is now a common practice. For example, in the US, the largest supplier of food aid, national law requires that commodities be produced in the US and shipped via US-owned ships or aircraft, a practice called "tied aid" (see *Africa Recovery*, January 2004).

Tied food aid, the OECD argued, increases costs by as much as 50 per cent over locally purchased goods, reduces market incentives to expand production in the affected area, slows arrival times and runs the risk of destroying rural economies by flooding recipient countries with free food. Almost all US food aid is provided as commodities, as was much of the more than 5 mn tonnes of food distributed by WFP in 2004.

> **"You have 25 equally desperate communities playing in this lottery for attention every week. Twenty four lose and one wins."**
>
> — Jan Egeland, under-secretary-general for humanitarian affairs

The issue has even become a subject of concern at the World Trade Organization (WTO), where European countries in particular have called US tied food aid a disguised agricultural-trade subsidy. They have also called for food aid to be provided as cash and for donated commodities to become subject to WTO "disciplines," or global trade regulations.

This "cash versus commodities" debate has attracted significant editorial attention in the world press, mostly in favour of untying food aid. However, a number of those actually delivering such aid — the WFP and charitable groups — oppose the plan.

Addressing representatives of African and least developed countries in May, Mr. Morris touched on the WFP's concerns. "Providing food aid in a timely way is a complicated business, especially in developing countries." Large purchases by relief agencies in regional grain markets, he explained, often drive up food prices beyond the means of the poor. This increases the number of hungry people. Inadequate roads and railways in developing countries mean that "regional purchases sometimes present high transport costs and storage problems," not the vast savings predicted by critics of tied aid.

"While we often prefer cash," he continued, "we also recognize that commodity donations help maintain a level of support in donor countries, and this is absolutely critical for our beneficiaries." Untying food aid, in the view of many humanitarian agencies and NGOs, risks destabilizing what is sometimes called the "iron triangle" of powerful domestic interests — farmers, shipping companies and charities — that provide political protection for aid budgets. Untying aid reduces the attractiveness of emergency aid for Northern farmers and shippers, since they are less likely to benefit from it, and this exposes emergency programmes to budget cuts. The result could be the worst of all possible outcomes: less money and less in-kind food aid.

Aid agencies oppose efforts to bring food aid under WTO regulation for many of the same reasons. In a letter to WTO Director-General Pascal Lamy in September, Mr. Morris cautioned that banning in-kind donations "will undercut overall donations and reduce flexibility.... When one of our major donors switched to a cash-only policy, its total food aid donations in tonnage terms dropped by more than half." Moreover, he noted, an increasing percentage of WFP donations are coming from middle-income developing countries, which can afford to provide commodities but not cash. Diversifying the donor base is an important long-term objective for the emergency aid community, he wrote. "A true pro-poor policy at the WTO would make special efforts not to interfere with the funding and delivery of WFP food aid."

Many NGOs share these concerns. Mr. Will Lynch, a senior adviser for the major US humanitarian group Catholic Relief Services (CRS), told *Africa Renewal* that world food aid represents just 0.03 per cent of the value of the global trade in agriculture, "yet the discussion is around emergency response and trade. That's not the issue. The real issue is that governments simply aren't providing enough, not how they are providing it."

Hungry Africa

Efforts to expand and streamline the CERF, however, have been welcomed by humanitarian groups. WFP Communications Director Neil Gallagher told *Africa Renewal* in November that "it will be great to have this kind of fund." The ability to respond at the first sign of danger, he said, would save lives, alleviate suffering and speed up rehabilitation and recovery efforts.

But Mr. Gallagher cautioned that emergency programmes, however well funded and administered, can never substitute for accelerated agricultural and economic development. Higher standards of living and improved harvests leave the poor less vulnerable to weather and changing prices. Increased investment in agriculture and rural infrastructure, such as in irrigation schemes, roads, access to fertilizer and improved seeds could dramatically lessen the impact of droughts and other natural disasters.

However, he added, donor aid for agricultural development has declined sharply, from 12 per cent of global aid spending a decade ago to only 4 per cent in 2004. "We lurch from emergency to emergency and hope that the TV crews capture it all on film," he continued. "Meanwhile, the number of chronically hungry people is going up, particularly in Africa, and the amount of food aid contributed by donors is going down. That's the real problem with the way the world feeds the poor."

Significantly, chronic hunger and malnutrition were the cause of 92 per cent of the 10 million hunger-related deaths around the world in 2004, the WFP reports, compared to 8 per cent caused by humanitarian emergencies. Despite a global pledge to halve world hunger by 2015, the numbers have risen sharply in the past decade, from 790 million in the early 1990s to an estimated 852 million in 2005 — over 300 million of them in Africa. Despite the increased need, contributions of food aid have dropped precipitously, from more than 15 mn metric tonnes in 1999 to just 7.5 mn in 2004.

Advocates charge that some donor policies also undermine national emergency relief programmes. In Malawi, for example, many humanitarian organizations, donor representatives and national officials have alleged that pressure from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank induced the government to sell much of its strategic grain reserve. Then came a famine in 2001–2 that took thousands of lives.

The charge has been heatedly denied by the IMF. But a 2005 study by the US government's Agency for International Development found that after Malawi's grain stocks reached 180,000 tonnes, "the IMF argued for a number of reasons that it no longer made sense to hold reserves at this level.... IMF therefore recommended ... a much smaller reserve."

Reforms in the relief aid system aim to deliver enough food to needy people, rapidly.

When famine struck, it was discovered that the entire reserve had been quietly sold off, triggering an official investigation and forcing the government and relief groups to invest money and precious time importing emergency food.

Patching the safety net

Addressing chronic hunger through ongoing, sustained feeding programmes, such as school lunches and maternal and infant nutrition schemes, are a far less costly and more effective way to attack hunger than are emergency relief operations, Mr. Gallagher said. Children in particular suffer lasting damage from malnutrition, which can be prevented only with predictable, long-term and targeted nutritional support.

Twenty years ago, he continued, 80 per cent of WFP food shipments supported ongoing or "social safety net" programmes, with 20 per cent devoted to emergencies. But in 2004 only 557,500 of the 5.1 mn tonnes of food shipped by WFP was earmarked for safety-net services.

"Donors don't find [safety-net spending] exciting," he explained. "It's not cutting-edge. It's not being involved in a big crisis situation. They say providing food aid as part of a social safety net isn't a long-term solution. But it is a long-term solution for the child who gets at least one good meal every day. If you don't feed kids when they're young and women when they're pregnant, you're just creating people who physically and mentally won't be able to help themselves later on." The mindset that food aid is only for emergencies, Mr. Gallagher observed, "just leads to greater hunger. It doesn't make sense.... Until the donors say 'a basic level of nutrition is everyone's right and we're going to provide it,' we will never end hunger."

The refusal of donors to support long-term nutrition initiatives, the CRS's Mr. Lynch noted, means that the charity can no longer continue the feeding programmes it runs for 800,000 people, including AIDS orphans, expecting mothers, schoolchildren and the rural poor in Angola, Benin, Kenya, Niger and Rwanda. The governments of those countries are unlikely to be able to continue the programmes on their own, and no other suppliers have been found.

"That's part of the problem," Mr. Lynch concluded. "The people these programmes serve are the poorest of the poor. They're off everyone's map." ■

Traditional healers boost primary health care

Reaching patients missed by modern medicine

By **Itai Madamombe**

The sun was relentless. So were the dozens of faces stubbornly waiting to enter the tiny thatched hut in Zimbabwe where Nhamburo Masango, a traditional healer, sat among herbs, bones and other remedies. An old man in front of me had a skin rash, another person a swollen leg, and somewhere a child complained of stomachache. No one, it seemed, was discouraged by the long, winding queue.

For many poor Zimbabweans there is nowhere else to go. Traditional healers are often the first and last line of defence against the most contagious and debilitating diseases that plague their lives. Although Western medicine is generally accepted throughout Africa, it has not replaced but rather augmented indigenous health approaches. Practitioners such as Mr. Masango remain central to the lives of many. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 80 per cent of people in Africa regularly seek their services.

Yet healers, for the most part, are not officially recognized by governments. They operate outside formal health structures. But leaving traditional healers on the sidelines can have serious consequences. Some patients, preferring the healers, may disregard their doctor's advice or take herbal medicines that could have dangerous interactions with pharmaceuticals. By working with these healers, doctors would be gaining allies who live in the patient's own community.

"We have, for a long time, been telling the government that they cannot go it alone in the delivery of health," Gordon Chavhunduka, the director of the Zimbabwe National Traditional Healers' Association, told a reporter in August. "There has been a lot of tension between the government and us over our usefulness." Prohibitive medical costs also make it impossible for the poor to get medical attention, he added. People are opting for traditional healers, who do not always demand cash up front and who far outnumber doctors.

But the issue goes beyond access. Traditional healing is linked to wider belief systems and remains integral to the lives of most Africans. People consult traditional healers whether or not they can afford medical services. In my own case, I could afford the best health care Zimbabwe could provide. Two weeks before coming home for a visit, I had undergone an exhaustive medical examination at one of the better hospitals in the US city of Boston, where I lived at the time. In Zimbabwe, although I was not in dire need of medical attention, my mother insisted that I have another "check-up" before going back to the US. There are some things Western medicine cannot fathom, she insisted.

Traditional healers are already a trusted source of health information and treatment. Given appropriate skills and means, they are well placed to play a bigger role in combating Africa's major diseases.

Doctors trained in the Western sciences largely focus on the biomedical causes of disease, while traditional beliefs take a more holistic approach. In Zimbabwe, traditional healers are reputed to divine the cause of a person's illness or social problems by throwing bones to interpret the will of dead ancestors. Some healers say they directly channel the ancestral spirit through their bodies. Many have in-depth knowledge of plant materials and their various curative powers. They use leaves, seeds, stems, bark or roots to treat symptoms. Animal parts and minerals are also employed, but to a lesser extent. Most traditional healers are both herbalists and diviners, but some specialize in one aspect. Many doctors believe healers to be charlatans, preying on the superstitions of local families. This is true in some — but not all — cases.

Regulating traditional healers

The gulf between modern and traditional practitioners has narrowed somewhat in the past decade. WHO advocates incorporating safe and effective traditional medicine into primary health-care systems. In 2002, the organization issued its first comprehensive guidelines to help countries, such as Zimbabwe, develop policies to regulate traditional medicine.

The Zimbabwean government announced in July that it will regularize the trade. Plans include forming a healers' council that will, among other things, authenticate the efficacy of herbal medicines. Minister of Health and Child Welfare David Parirenyatwa expressed concern that some healers claim to posses cures for various terminal ailments, among them HIV/AIDS. There is no way to evaluate such claims without a council representing all the healers, he explained.

"There is need for some standardization of operations," Dr. Parirenyatwa suggested during a meeting with local traditional healers. "For instance, people should be able to consult registered and licenced traditional healers at proper premises. Currently, traditional healers are operating in all sorts of places like truck stops and backyard rooms. That has to change."

South Africa leads continental efforts to bring traditional healers into a legal framework. In early 2005, parliament approved a law to recognize the country's estimated 200,000 healers as health-service providers. Those registered would, for example, be allowed to prescribe sick leave and offer treatment for numerous conditions. Some hailed this as an important step in rooting out charlatans and protecting patients, but others saw it differently. Doctors for Life, which represents over a thousand health practitioners in South Africa, objected to the government's plans to legitimize healers.

"Most of the medicines used by traditional practitioners have not been validated scientifically," stated Doctors

for Life. "Many people suffer because of the serious complications that arise due to the use of traditional medicines." The group warned that such a law could open "a can of worms" of legal controversies and medical complications. They urged that remedies be thoroughly researched before approval.

Other medical practitioners point out that traditional healers, with or without the support of the law, are already providing services within communities. Bringing them within the primary-health fold would therefore help rather than hinder efforts to flush out harmful practices.

A traditional healer in Uganda treating a patient's wounds

Collaboration between healers and doctors

There is growing realization that it is possible for traditional and Western practitioners to work together to improve patients' well-being, especially when it comes to developing new medications, reporting new cases of contagious diseases and finding ways to ensure that patients stick to their prescribed treatments.

In Tanzania, the Dar es Salaam-based Institute of Traditional Medicine has a pilot programme to test the efficacy of local herbs in helping reduce the severity of other illnesses often seen in HIV patients. Herbalists are allowing the institute to evaluate the substances they use to treat patients. If scientists discover beneficial elements in the herbs, they purify them and determine what the proper dosage should be. This addresses a major concern that some people have with the way medicines have been prescribed by traditional healers. Some 25 herbalists are currently working with the institute.

We accept that "some herbs respond positively to some of the diseases associated with HIV/AIDS, and these need to be worked on to understand their functioning," says Dr. Edmund Kayombo, who is helping the institute establish the effectiveness of traditional herbs. These herbs include remedies for strengthening the immune system, increasing appetite and treating oral thrush, skin rashes and diarrhoea. They cannot be expected to cure HIV, he says, but they can lessen some of the symptoms that occur frequently in people with HIV.

Traditional healers can be particularly effective in monitoring disease outbreaks. They live within communities and are likely to be the first to know if any new disease surfaces. Ms. Nora Groce and Ms. Mary Reeve, medical anthropologists, argue that open lines of communication between traditional healers and the medical community could tremendously improve surveillance. Health officials must include traditional healers in their educational outreach to doctors and must be trained to know what information they should request from healers.

"Traditional healers must be taught why, what, when and how to report unusual symptoms in their patients to local officials," Ms. Groce and Ms. Reeve state. Checklists or pictorial guides to symptoms, diseases and modes of transmission could facilitate communication between healers and officials, they say.

To an extent, "an informal system of referral already exists between traditional practitioners and doctors. But traditional healers complain that information largely flows in only one direction. "Traditional healers already send referral letters to clinics," notes Dr. James Hartzell, a professor at South Africa's University of KwaZulu-Natal medical school. They "are just asking for at least basic information back from the biomedical team, which is often hostile to them, such as what were patients given in terms of treatment."

Dr. Hartzell is working on a project to improve collaboration between doctors and healers in caring for people with HIV/AIDS. It includes training 350 healers in prevention, voluntary counselling and testing, home-based care and anti-retroviral therapy. He believes patients listen well to traditional healers. That gives healers the potential to make "a big impact on patient compliance and management, with good collaboration from the biomedical team."

Healers boost patient compliance

Traditional healers are already a trusted source of health information and treatment. Given appropriate skills and means, they are well placed to play a bigger role in combating Africa's major diseases.

The incidence of tuberculosis (TB) was on the rise in the Hlabisa district of KwaZulu-Natal, up by 360 per cent in the seven years prior to 1999. TB can be easily cured if patients take their medication every day and complete the course.

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'Children just do not have to die'

Simple, cheap interventions can reduce African mortality rates

By **Itai Madamombe**

Seventeen-month-old Nana Moussa was on the verge of death, in a remote rural village in south-central Niger, far from medical facilities. Her frail body, which had shrunk to a mere 4.3 kilograms, could no longer prop itself up. Alarmed, Nana's parents walked with her all night to reach a village with public transport, and then rode for six more hours in an overcrowded van to Maradi, a regional capital. Like many other poor parents in Niger struggling to provide adequate nutrition for their children, they finally reached the Centre de recuperation nutritionnelle intensive, a therapeutic feeding centre operated by the non-governmental Medecins sans frontieres and supported by the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF).

> "We know what treated mosquito nets, immunization and vitamin A supplements can do.... What we need now is for countries to make sure that life saving health interventions get to the children who need them."
>
> — Per Engebak, UNICEF regional director

Nana's recuperation was difficult, but she started to progress four weeks into her treatment for kwashiorkor. She, like many children too weak to process solid food, was first given an easy-to-digest milk formula rich in nutrients. As she grew stronger and her appetite returned, Nana proceeded to the next phase, in which a vitamin-rich peanut paste, Plumpy Nut, was added to the diet. She would have to weigh at least 5.6 kg before returning home.

Interventions such as this "aren't complicated, they aren't expensive and they work," said UNICEF Regional Director for Eastern and Southern Africa Per Engebak in July. "We know what treated mosquito nets, immunization and vitamin A supplements, for instance, can do. With these and other simple measures in place, children just do not have to die. What we need now is for countries to make sure that life-saving health interventions get to the children who need them."

Leading child-support organizations affirm that cheap and simple treatments can cut by at least two-thirds the 11 million child deaths that occur worldwide each year. Some of these fatalities are caused by preventable diseases such as pneumonia, diarrhoea, measles and HIV/AIDS. Malnutrition, lack of safe water and poor sanitation contribute to more than half of them.

Every day, 5,500 children across 21 countries in Eastern and Southern Africa alone die before they reach their fifth birthday. Put in different terms: in the last two months, more children died in that region than in Asia's December 2004 tsunami. And unless African governments and their international partners move quickly to redress the situation, 330,000 more children will die in the next two months.

Providing children with safe water can greatly cut waterborne illnesses.

Children key to development

While Nana struggled to reach her target weight, countries across Africa marked the annual Day of the African Child on 16 June. It was an opportunity to reflect on progress towards children's welfare and, perhaps, to acknowledge the indispensable role children play in the progress of any nation. Ignore the needs of the smallest and most fragile, UNICEF warns, and you rob a country of future farmers, teachers, nurses and leaders.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), adopted by world leaders in 2000, recognize this critical link. Six out of the eight MDGs address children. If attained, children would not have to die from treatable diseases and all could go to school on a full stomach and in good health. They would grow up in a protective family environment, free from abuse and exploitation.

Yet all the MDGs are running behind schedule. UNICEF reports that the goal to reduce by two-thirds the mortality rate among children less than five years of age lags farthest behind. Africa cannot meet this goal until well into the 22nd century, unless much more is done to preserve children's lives.

"With the childhood of so many under threat, our collective future is compromised. Only as we move closer to realizing the rights of all children will countries move closer to their goals of development and peace," UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan warns in a foreword to UNICEF's *State of the World's Children Report 2005*. While the family offers the first line of protection for children, many parents are

By protecting against malaria, insecticide-treated bed nets can reduce African child mortality by one fifth.

simply too poor to provide all basic necessities for children to survive and develop, UNICEF stresses. Governments therefore must devote a bigger share of their budgets towards meeting children's needs.

$3 bed nets

Even modest investments can bring significant results. A simple $3 insecticide-treated mosquito net for every African child, for example, could reduce overall child mortality rates by 20 per cent by protecting against malaria, the number-one killer of children in Africa. The net works as a barrier between the body and mosquitoes that carry malaria.

Even when they are available, these nets are beyond the means of the average African family, yet some donors recommend selling them under an approach known as "social marketing." However, Professor Jeffrey Sachs, the UN Secretary-General's special adviser on the MDGs, argues that they should be heavily subsidized or given away free. "Mothers and children are dying of a completely preventable disease because we are trying to sell bed nets. Let me urge the end of social marketing today."

UNICEF is following Prof. Sachs' recommendation. In the village of Chatowa in Malawi, malaria wreaked havoc for many years, killing children and rendering adults too ill to work. Fed up, the villagers have rallied to stop this deadly disease. In June 2004 they formed, with government support, a health committee to sell insecticide-treated mosquito nets, subsidized by UNICEF. Thanks to the new initiative, the number of cases of malaria has been cut by half.

"I used to get attacks at least three times a year. My whole family suffered. I couldn't do housework and my husband would have to leave work to take me to the health clinic," Ms. Christina Yokoniya, secretary of the village health committee, told UNICEF. "People no longer complain about malaria attacks and we have seen that we are not bitten by mosquitoes so often."

Because of UNICEF's subsidy, Malawians have been able to purchase nets for 50 kwacha (less than 20 US cents) each. In 2002 alone, UNICEF provided over 4.4 mn mosquito nets to 25 African countries, at a total value of $9.5 mn. It also purchased $3 mn worth of insecticide to treat the nets. While UNICEF is the global leader in procuring and distributing lifesaving nets at an affordable price, communities themselves are finding creative ways to ensure that those in need have access, no matter how low their income.

"When a family is too poor to pay cash for the net, committee members accept bartered goods, such as maize or groundnuts as payment," noted Mr. Evance Chambakata, chairman of the Chatowa village committee. "We feel very proud because we are helping to save lives."

No safe water for 43 per cent of children

Other simple solutions, such as providing a bucket of clean water, can also drastically improve child survival. It is estimated that about 20 litres of water is the bare minimum that a child needs for drinking, washing and basic sanitation. Yet some 4,000 children worldwide die every day simply because they lack clean water. UNICEF warns that the MDG target of cutting in half by 2015 the number of people (1 billion) who do not have a safe water supply within 15 minutes walk of their home will not be met unless the international community steps up its efforts.

In sub-Saharan Africa, 43 per cent of children drink unsafe water, and as a result millions suffer from waterborne illnesses.

Ms. Fatima Kituxi knows well the hardships of growing up without enough fresh water. She has spent many hours searching for water in and around Mabuia village, just north of Angola's capital. She also has had to care for brothers and sisters who have often suffered from typhoid, diarrhoea and other waterborne diseases. Her first child, Isabel, died in 1999 after a series of diarrhoea attacks. "Isabel was always sick. She could just never get strong," Ms. Kituxi said, hugging her second child, 13-month-old Fernando. "By the time Isabel was Fernando's age, she had been sick a dozen times."

In 2000, UNICEF responded to Mabuia's appalling child mortality rates by helping the Angolan government to build a pipeline from a river to the community. A filtering system was added to ensure that the water was clean and safe. Latrines, washbasins, taps and showers were also installed to improve sanitation. The community created a committee that now maintains the system. People were also taught good hygiene practices.

The results were exceptional. Diarrhoea rates dropped to almost zero and child deaths plummeted. Girls were suddenly freed from hours of walking to and from the river, which allowed them to better concentrate on their schoolwork. Mothers found more time to grow

crops, which could be sold to boost the family income.

"A mother must take care of her children, but we cannot do that when we have only dirty water," Ms. Kituxi said. "This project has changed the fortunes of this village. Look at my son — he is healthy. This is what every mother prays for: that there will be no more tears."

Mabuia, however, remains the exception rather than the rule in Angola. Nearly three decades of civil war devastated water systems across the country. Sanitation coverage declined in urban areas from 62 to 56 per cent and in rural areas from 19 to 16 per cent. A mere $100 to $125 could provide a household with a pit latrine, UNICEF estimates. It would cost about $8,000 to drill a borehole that could supply water to about 400–500 people in Angola. Once installed, only $250 a year would be needed to maintain the infrastructure. A well costs even less, an estimated $2,000–$2,500.

Immunization frees children from disease

More than 2 million children worldwide die annually from diseases that could be prevented at a cost of less than $30 per child, according to UNICEF's experience. Expanded inoculation against scourges such as measles, polio, and maternal and neonatal tetanus would reduce child mortality, improving maternal health and reversing the spread of killer diseases.

Vaccines protect nearly three-quarters of the world's children against major illnesses, but mostly in richer countries. Immunization against polio, for example, has virtually wiped out the disease in industrialized countries, while it remains a menace to Africa. The continent accounts for 75 per cent of polio cases reported worldwide.

Polio is caused by a virus which results in acute infection of the central nervous system, leading to paralysis. The virus is passed through contact with the feces of an infected person, for example by shaking someone's dirty hands and then contaminating food. Polio can be easily prevented by an oral vaccine and many African countries were, in the past, able to defeat the disease. But it began to spread once again in 2003 in West Africa and beyond, after local authorities halted vaccinations for a number of months. So far, there have been outbreaks in 16 formerly polio-free countries.

Many countries are now redoubling efforts to reach as many children as possible in a series of three immunization drives. "In late 2002 and early 2003, all African nations with the exception of Nigeria and Niger were polio-free. African nations have had great success and sound positive experience in stopping polio virus transmission," UNICEF Senior Technical Advisor on Polio Eradication Dennis King explained in May.

Polio immunization in Nigeria: Since early 2005, millions of African children have been immunized against the polio virus.

Early reports indicate that the first round, from 25 February to 1 March, reached as many as 95 million children. The second round in April aimed to reach 100 million children before the virus began to spread more rapidly during the most virulent months stretching from July to September.

For the first time in many months, vaccination teams were able to reach children in some of the continent's most troubled spots, such as Côte d'Ivoire and Sudan. Border territories, refugee camps and conflict zones are among the areas at highest risk for transmission, as well as the hardest to reach. Not only must the vaccinators find the children, they must find them while the vaccine is still cold and effective. Organizers create "cold chains" — a series of relay points that have freezers and cold boxes to maintain the vaccine's potency. Because some villages are remote and lack good roads, volunteers travel by any means necessary — motorcycle, canoe and, most often, foot.

"It is truly an inspiration to witness the commitment of the tens of thousands of health workers, volunteers and Rotary members who are going house-to-house and village to village to hand-deliver the oral polio vaccine to every child," says Mr. Ambroise Tschimbalanga-Kasongo, Rotary International's chairman of the African Regional PolioPlus Committee. Campaigns also use the opportunity to deliver other lifesaving packages, such as vitamin A drops, an immunity-boosting remedy that has saved an estimated 1.2 million lives over the last 12 years.

Significant gaps in coverage exist, in some areas as large as 20 per cent. Funds are running short. Some $200 mn will be required in 2006. But major donors are not stepping up fast enough to provide vital funding, UNICEF's representative in Ethiopia, Mr. Bjorn Ljungqvist, said in July.

"A cloud of cynicism has settled over Africa — cynicism caused by everything from corruption to armed conflicts, cynicism felt by everyone from donors to the general public," Mr. Ljungqvist noted. "But this cloud hides the fact that innocent children are dying unnecessarily. There are simple things that we can do and must do to save these children." ■

African migration: from tensions to solutions

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governments and citizens in industrialized countries is irregular migration: illegal entry, bogus marriages, overstaying temporary admissions, abuse of asylum systems and the difficulty of removing unsuccessful applicants.

Migration is currently at the centre of disagreements between the mainly poor sending countries and the richer receiving nations. Today the world is more connected than ever. Information, commodities and money flow rapidly across national boundaries, a phenomenon often referred to as *globalization*. But while industrial countries are promoting easier flows of capital, goods and services (which they mainly supply), they are at the same time restricting the movement of labour, which comes mainly from developing countries. Developing countries view this as a double standard, especially since labour is an important factor in the production of goods and services.

Between 1960 and 2000, the share of merchandise exports and trade in services has roughly doubled, owing to new global trade policies negotiated at the World Trade Organization (WTO). But during the same period the share of international migrants in relation to the world's population has increased only slightly, from 2.5 to 3 per cent. This is due to increasing restrictions on official migration, which are also partly to blame for the rise in illegal migration.

By 2000 there were an estimated 175 million migrants worldwide, most moving from low- to higher-income nations. About 9 per cent — 16.3 million — were African, down from 12 per cent in 1960. Between 5 and 12 per cent of the population of 30 industrialized nations are migrants, notes the Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM).

Complex issues

Migration brings with it "many complex challenges," says UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. The issues include human rights, economic opportunity, labour shortages and unemployment, the brain drain, multiculturalism and integration, and flows of refugees and asylum seekers. Policy makers also must grapple with issues of law enforcement. Especially in the wake of the terrorist attacks on the US in 2001, many are focusing on human and national security.

"We cannot ignore the real policy difficulties posed by migration," says Mr. Annan. "But neither should we lose sight of its immense potential to benefit migrants, the countries they leave and those to which they migrate."

An aspiring African migrant on the road in Morocco, a common departure point for migrants seeking to reach Europe.

Owing in part to labour shortages in certain sectors, an expanding global economy and the long-term trend of ageing populations, many industrial countries need migrants. They face shortages in highly skilled areas such as information technology and health services, as well as in manual jobs in agriculture, manufacturing and construction. Many turn a blind eye to irregular migration to fill jobs locals do not want to take on.

But there are limits to the number of migrants they can take, for a number of reasons, including rising national unemployment. Some countries of the European Union, for example, have a growing number of "underutilized" workers, who are either unemployed or forced to work part-time. In France and Italy, the rate of underutilized labour reached 21 per cent in 2004, up from 17 per cent in 1994. As a result, more receiving countries are becoming more selective about the migrants they are willing to take in, opting mainly for those with skills or capital to invest.

In contrast, developing countries are demanding more open policies. They view migration as offering an opportunity to reduce the ranks of the unemployed, earn revenue through the remittance of workers' earnings, and import skills, knowledge and technology via returning residents. Yet they are also concerned about losing skilled workers to richer countries, a process referred to as the *brain drain*. Aware of the detrimental effect of such migration, some have introduced measures to reduce the departure of people whose skills are needed, such as doctors and nurses.

How to develop comprehensive policies to manage all these issues is daunting. Migration is today at the point where international trade was 50 years ago, says Mr. Dhananjayan Sriskandarajah of the Institute for Public Policy Research in the US. For many at that time, the current governance system for international trade was unimaginable, he says.

"Those thinking about a new international framework for managing migration face remarkably similar challenges," he says. "How to design a system that leads to freer and fairer flows of people, skills and remittances?"

Creating jobs

Most people who seek to migrate are pushed by circumstances in their home countries. War, poverty and persecution prompt people to become refugees, asylum seekers and labour migrants. In most emigrant-producing countries, jobs are scarce or salaries are too low, obliging people to seek opportunities elsewhere. Therefore, in times of peace, governments can stem the flow of citizens seeking to leave by creating jobs.

"Globalization has so far not led to the creation of sufficient and sustainable decent work opportunities around the world," says ILO Director-General Juan Somavia. So far, he says, "better jobs and income for the world's workers has not been a priority in policy-making."

Over the last few decades many African countries have failed to create jobs, despite pursuing structural adjustment policies recommended by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Instead, in many countries there has been a decline in job opportunities and real incomes. Between 1994 and 2004, the number of workers living on less than a dollar a day increased by 28 million in sub-Saharan Africa.

"I dread to think of the scenes we may be contemplating in, say, 20 years if we do not make a massive consolidated effort to create jobs and opportunities in West Africa," says UN Special Representative for West Africa Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah. "What is happening now is only a tip of the iceberg, compared to what will occur if urgent solutions are not found."

The Addis Ababa-based UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) proposes that job-creation policies on the continent focus on labour-intensive sectors such as agriculture. Governments should work to minimize regulations to private, domestic and foreign investment, provide infrastructure and promote political systems that allow the majority of citizens to become involved. ECA notes in its *Economic Report on Africa 2005*. Currently, jobs being created in agriculture are in the informal economy, at low levels of productivity, the ECA notes. These cannot provide workers with enough income to pull themselves or their families out of poverty.

> **"We cannot ignore the real policy difficulties posed by migration, but neither should we lose sight of its immense potential to benefit migrants, the countries they leave and those to which they migrate."**
>
> **— Kofi Annan, UN Secretary-General**

International trade policies make the situation worse for many African countries. For example, most migrant-receiving countries protect their farm sectors through subsidies, guaranteeing their farmers prices higher than on world markets and leaving poor farmers in sending countries unable to compete.

Even investment policies in industrial nations, which could be used to manage the flow of migrants, are falling short. "The incentive to invest in developing countries is driven by expected profits, not the need for jobs to reduce emigration," says Mr. Philip Martin, a professor at the University of California in the US.

"We don't need more diagnosing or one-size-fits-all solutions," says Mr. Somavia. "It's time for the international financial institutions, the entire UN system and bilateral cooperation to focus energies on job creation in Africa, which we know is so fundamental to peace, security and unity."

Toward fairer policies

Many developing countries maintain that freer migration would be a quick means of increasing their benefits from globalization. The challenge is to develop policies that are acceptable to both industrial and developing nations and that will spur global economic growth.

"Together, Africans and Europeans, we have a duty to dismantle the illegal immigration networks, behind which hides an appalling and mafia-like traffic," French President Jacques Chirac told the France-Africa Summit in Mali in December. "Together, we must encourage co-development and enable Africans to enjoy decent conditions for living and working in their own countries."

But successful international cooperation to spur Africa's economies will depend on adequate financing for the continental development strategy, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), including increases in aid and a lasting solution to Africa's debt burden.

African countries are also pushing industrial nations to drop barriers to the free movement of labour through ongoing negotiations at the WTO. African and other developing countries are arguing that just as trade in goods, services and information have been opened up, so should the flow of labour, a sector in which developing countries hold an advantage and from which they could earn substantial revenue. Led by India, developing nations are using the liberalization of labour as one of the markers for measuring the success of the current round of WTO negotiations, due for completion in 2006.

International conventions

The GCIM, a body established at the urging of the UN Secretary-General in 2003, proposes that the UN set up an Interagency Global Migration Facility. The agency would bring together more than a dozen UN and other international agencies and would be the primary forum for migration.

Migrants who leave their countries in search of work are currently not adequately protected by international law. Two conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO) are the main instruments safeguarding their rights. The conventions emphasize equality, stating that the wages of migrants should be the same as those of other workers doing the same jobs in host countries. They also recommend that sending and receiving nations adopt bilateral agreements to protect the rights of foreign workers.

The UN International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, which came into force in 2003, goes a little further. It covers all economic migrants, including seafarers and the self-employed. The law lays out the powers and responsibilities of states to manage movements of people across their borders and spells out the rights of international migrants.

"Nevertheless, the gaps in international law and norms remain, particularly related to migration for family and economic reasons," notes Ms. Susan Martin of the Institute of International Migration at Georgetown University in the US. The ILO conventions entered into force with relatively few signatories and the UN convention has been ratified by only 27 states — all of them source countries for migration.

The international conventions are unpopular among receiving countries partly because they cost money, for example, to provide services for migrants. Some developed countries argue that these

Africans held by Spanish immigration authorities. Northern countries are increasingly concerned by growing flows of undocumented migrants.

laws impinge on their right to determine their own laws.

"The US believes that the International Organization of Migration, while not within the UN system, is the appropriate body to centre discussions on migration," says Ambassador Sichan Siv, a US representative to the UN, reacting to the GCIM's proposal for an international agency on migration. While coordination is important, he says, "such an effort must have at its core that migration law and policies are the sovereign rights of states."

Temporary migration

In the US, where there are about 34 million foreign-born workers (11 million illegal), President Bush is pushing for new domestic legislation to allow temporary migration for workers for up to three years. Those who participate would not, however, be able to apply for permanent legal status once their time in the programme expires. With more than 1 million immigrants caught trying to enter the US from Mexico in 2005 alone, Mr. Bush's plan recommends increased border patrols.

The proposals have generated heated debate, with some opposed to giving any concessions to people living in the country illegally. Such concessions, they argue, would reward "wrongdoers." But there is growing pressure from US businesses for comprehensive immigration reform, including guest-worker programmes, to provide legal ways for those who have entered the country illegally to continue working.

Because of the need to fill jobs in many developed countries, there has been a trend toward relaxing entry conditions for certain categories of workers, particularly in agriculture on a seasonal basis. The agricultural sector of the European Union employs almost 500,000 seasonal workers from outside the 15 long-time EU members each year, notes the *World Economic and Social Survey 2004*, a report produced by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

Migration on the rise

Despite attempts to limit the number of people moving across borders, especially between rich and poor countries, experts forecast that international migration is going to rise. One reason is demographic. While populations in developing countries are growing rapidly, those in high-income nations are not. To keep their economies running, developed countries need manpower. Europe's largest employer, the UK's National Health Service, is highly dependent on migrants to work as nurses and doctors, while the high technology sector in the US uses thousands of young migrants to fill many vacant posts.

Also, migration is good for economic growth. The World Bank estimates that if the labour force in high-income countries were to grow by 3 per cent, even if the additional workers were all migrants, there would be $356 bn in annual global economic gains. "That would be larger than gains from trade, for example," says Mr. Dilip Ratha, senior economist at the World Bank.

The benefits of migration go not only to industrial nations, he says, but also to developing countries, which now receive more than $165 bn annually in remittances, money sent home by workers abroad. "Remittances reduce poverty because they generate direct income transfers to the households," says Mr. Ratha. Household surveys in Uganda show that remittances to that country may have reduced poverty by 11 per cent.

The question is whether it is better to promote or restrict the mobility of people seeking to migrate. Simply closing the door could have deeply troubling implications for the human rights of the people involved, might not be effective and would limit the benefits migration delivers for both receiving and sending countries, says Mr. Sriskandarajah of the US-based Institute for Public Policy Research.

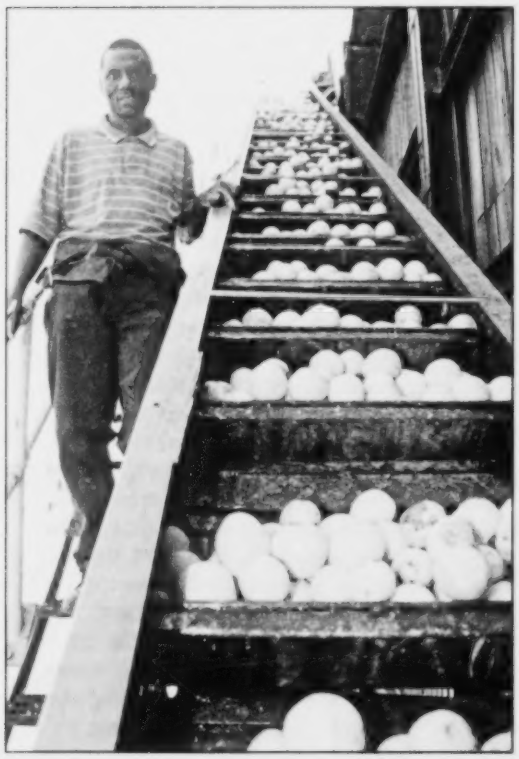
A better response, he suggests, is to start by recognizing that migration can be positive for those who move, for the societies they move to and for the societies they leave behind. ■

New barriers hinder African trade

Health standards in rich countries limit continent's ability to export

By **Gumisai Mutume**

Just as developing countries are beginning to overcome some major hurdles in their quest to expand trade with industrial countries, another is rearing its head. As a result of agreements negotiated at the World Trade Organization (WTO), traditional trade protection measures such as tariffs and quotas are falling away. But to some extent they are being replaced by domestic technical regulations that permit countries to bar products from entering their markets if the products do not meet certain standards.



Citrus in Zimbabwe: African agricultural exports often face excessively strict health standards to enter Northern markets.

These obstacles include measures ostensibly aimed at protecting citizens from everyday food hazards, known in WTO language as sanitary and phytosanitary measures (SPS). High tariffs remain a significant barrier, says South African Finance Minister Trevor Manuel, but "non-tariff barriers, such as arbitrarily imposed phytosanitary rules, further limit goods" exported to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), a grouping of 30 wealthy nations.

Technical barriers

The use of technical barriers has grown during the last two decades. In an effort to regularize such standards, the 149-member WTO's Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures came into force in 1995. The agreement was designed to provide uniform rules for all laws, regulations and requirements regarding how a product is produced, processed, stored or transported, to ensure that its import does not pose a risk to human, animal or plant health. Sanitary measures are aimed at safeguarding human and animal health, while phytosanitary ones are intended to protect plants.

The SPS agreement requires, for instance, that goods be imported from disease-free areas, inspected prior to export and not exceed maximum levels of pesticide or insecticide use. Health risks posed by fresh foods and agricultural goods include salmonella poisoning, foot and mouth disease and sugar plant pests.

The agreement is also meant to prevent countries from using SPS measures simply to block trade, stating explicitly that the measures cannot be employed in "a manner which would constitute a disguised restriction on international trade." But although importing countries are encouraged to use existing international standards, they are nevertheless allowed to adopt stricter regulations if they can provide scientific justification for their actions.

Mr. Hezron Nyangito of the Kenya Institute of Public Policy Research and Analysis notes that while the agreement aims to safeguard the health of citizens, it "also provides a loophole that allows countries to introduce measures that result in higher levels of protection" than the international norm.

Studies by the US Department of Agriculture and the OECD show that questionable technical barriers were reported in 62 countries in 1996, leading to estimated trade losses of $5 bn. Such analyses of SPS trade impacts most frequently focus on developed countries, despite suggestions by the World Bank and other agencies that the effects could be greater for developing countries, since they are highly dependent on agricultural exports.

"The problem is not that international trade is inherently opposed to the needs and interests of the poor," says Mr. Manuel, "but that the rules that govern it are rigged in favour of the rich." The international trading system "is not a force of nature," he says, but "a system of exchange, managed by rules and institutions that reflect political choices."

Because the standards were set mainly by developed countries during the last series of trade negotiations, the Uruguay Round, they mainly reflect the interests of those nations. During the Uruguay Round, which ended in 1994, many developing countries either could not afford to send negotiators to represent them or focused on areas of greater or more immediate concern, such as Northern agricultural subsidies. Many still are not part of the international standard-setting agencies that govern this area, nor do they have the money, manpower or infrastructure needed to abide by the standards created.

While there is a clear need for SPS measures to protect consumers, the benefits of trade liberalization in the agricultural sector achieved by the Uruguay

Round "could be undermined by the protectionist use of sanitary and phytosanitary measures," warns Ms. Simonetta Zarrilli of the UN Conference on Trade and Development.

Banned fish

There are many examples of SPS measures being used to restrict African goods from overseas markets. For several years in the late 1990s, for example, European countries banned fish from Kenya, Mozambique, Tanzania and Uganda due to concerns about these countries' sanitary standards and control systems. Uganda lost $36.9 mn in potential earnings during the ban. In Tanzania, where fish and fish products accounted for 10 per cent of annual exports, fishermen dependent on EU sales lost 80 per cent of their income, the World Bank reports.

"Some of the requirements are legitimate with respect to food safety," notes Mr. Nyangito, the Kenyan researcher. "But many African countries find it difficult to meet the standards because of technical and resource-capacity constraints." Studies in Kenya show that to comply with high EU standards, farmers would have to spend 10 times more than they currently do. To comply, Uganda would need to spend $300 mn upgrading its honey-processing plants and coffee producers would spend 200 per cent more to produce coffee at the required standard.

If the EU were to use international standards on pesticides on bananas, rather than its more restrictive ones, annual African exports would increase by $400 mn, according to the March 2005 report of the Commission for Africa, a high-level panel established by UK Prime Minister Tony Blair.

African meat exports to the US, dairy products to the EU and animal products destined for Japan often face restrictions on health grounds, notes Mr. Nyangito. Affected countries regard these hindrances as discriminatory, "because the restrictions are not specific, but depend on the inspections that are undertaken at the time," says Mr. Nyangito.

The EU's commissioner for health and consumer protection, Mr. David Byrne, agrees that "there is an image that the EU, along with other developed countries, uses food-safety standards for protectionist ends." However, he maintains that SPS measures in the EU are not intended to block trade, but to safeguard the region's health standards. "I fully accept that the EU sets very high food-safety standards and that these are difficult to meet, in particular for developing countries. I make no apology for these high standards." The region, he says, has invested too much in systems for safe food production to compromise them. "Food must conform to our very high safety standards, irrespective of its origins."

"The problem is not that international trade is inherently opposed to the needs and interests of the poor, but that the rules that govern it are rigged in favour of the rich."

— Mr. Trevor Manuel, Finance Minister, South Africa

Costly contaminants

According to Action for Southern Africa (ACTSA), a non-governmental organization based in London, African horticultural producers are finding it harder to penetrate the EU market because of overly restrictive rules on the levels of contaminants permissible in food, known as maximum residue levels.

The WTO allows countries to stop food entering their borders if it does not meet certain standards for biological and chemical contaminants. A UN organ, the Joint Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA), composed of experts from the World Health Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization, makes recommendations on appropriate global standards to a body called the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

"The EU, however, frequently chooses to ignore Codex recommendations and is often much stricter, only permitting very low levels of residues to be left on produce," reports ACTSA. "Many producers and activists in Southern Africa feel this legislation is a form of backdoor trade protectionism."

One example involves residues of aflatoxins, which cause cancer, found in processed nuts and dried fruit, among other foods. Since 1998, the EU has demanded that food entering its market meet stricter standards for aflatoxins than JECFA recommends. This is despite studies that show that cutting the levels to EU standards would lead to only two fewer deaths per billion people per year. The World Bank estimates that for African exporters of cereals, fruits, vegetables and nuts, the annual cost of complying would be about $670 mn.

The bar has been raised so high that even industrialized countries such as the US also complain about EU standards for aflatoxins. For dairy products, the EU demands the lowest level of aflatoxins that can be detected using existing technology — a standard much stricter than those used by the US. Farmers in the US charge that this impedes trade in dairy products with the EU, since it is difficult to reach the EU standards in certain parts of the US for climatic reasons.

SPS measures can become especially complicated when different countries make different assessments of the nature of the risk or have different degrees of risk tolerance, notes Mr. Leonardo Lacovone, an economic adviser in Mozambique's agriculture ministry. "In some cases there are differences in the views expressed by experts and in other cases we may essentially be faced with political pressure based on a widespread but not universal public fear."

The EU's campaign to "harmonize international standards" from intellectual property rights to environmental regulations presents a major challenge for the WTO, notes Mr. Razeen Sally of the London School of Economics in a study on EU policy. Europe's proposals are adding complex and intrusive regulations to the WTO agenda, which could be too burdensome for many poor countries, he says.

"This implicit standards-harmonization agenda, aimed at raising developing country standards to developed country levels, is now the most insidious force in the WTO," he notes. "The result could be an extra layer of developed country regulatory barriers that would shut out cheap developing country exports." ■

Seeking peace with justice in Uganda

International charges filed against northern rebel leaders

By **Ernest Harsch**

For nearly two decades,' the rebel Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in northern Uganda has committed massacres, torture, child abductions, rapes and countless other atrocities beyond the reach of justice and far from the attention of the world media. But in October that impunity began to erode, as the new International Criminal Court (ICC) charged five top LRA commanders with crimes against humanity.

The arrest warrants, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan noted, "should send a powerful signal around the world that those responsible for such crimes will be held accountable for their actions."

The indictments — the result of a year-long investigation — were the first issued by the ICC, established in 2003 following negotiations sponsored by the UN. Headquartered in the Hague, the Netherlands, it is the world's first permanent war-crimes tribunal. So far, 139 countries have signed the international statute creating the court and 100 have ratified it. The court's chief prosecutor is also investigating widespread killings in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and in Sudan's western Darfur region.

Speaking before the UN General Assembly on 8 November, Judge Philippe Kirsch, president of the ICC, said that the court offers an opportunity "to ensure that the perpetrators of the worst atrocities no longer benefit from impunity, to deter future perpetrators and to build a culture of accountability." Noting that the court does not have a police force of its own, he urged all countries to cooperate in ensuring the arrest of the indicted LRA commanders so that the first trials could begin in 2006.

A long nightmare

The LRA began its insurgency in northern Uganda in 1986, claiming that it was fighting for a political system based on the Bible's Ten Commandments. In practice, its brutal methods have been directed largely against the region's civilian population. Its fighters have pillaged and burned entire villages, carried out massacres, mutilated people and, most notoriously, abducted children.

The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimates that 25,000 children have been kidnapped by the LRA since the conflict began, nearly half of them since 2002. Abducted boys and girls have been forced to fight and serve as porters, while many girls have also been pressed into sexual slavery. The war has displaced an estimated 1.6 million people in northern Uganda, obliging them to seek refuge in 135 overcrowded and unsanitary camps.

At the outset, the government of Uganda sought to end the insurgency primarily through military means. But the LRA was able to operate from bases in war-torn southern Sudan, beyond the Ugandan army's immediate reach. In recent months, some LRA forces have also moved into eastern DRC.

Beginning in 1994, the Ugandan authorities, acting through mediators, sought negotiations with the LRA, but with little effect. In 2000, the parliament approved an offer of full amnesty to all rebels, provided that they gave up armed activities and handed in their weapons. Some 15,000 former fighters, many from the LRA, have taken advantage of the amnesty, which encouraged many children originally kidnapped by the LRA to escape and return home.

A Ugandan soldier with displaced children. More than 1.6 million villagers have fled the terror-stricken northern countryside.

Impact on amnesty?

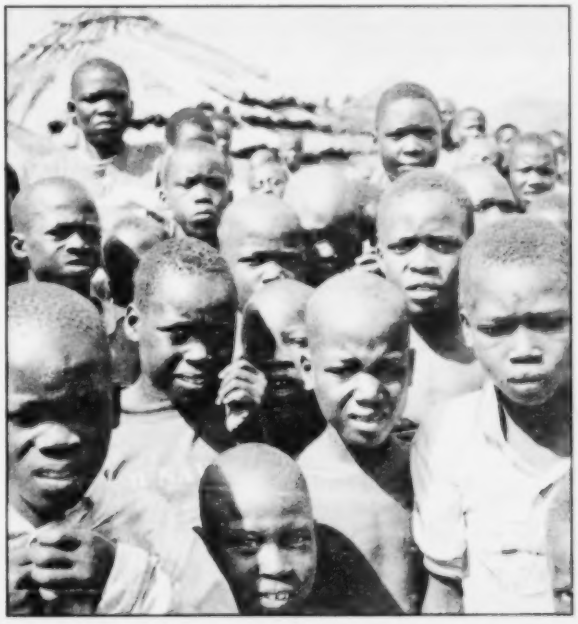
But with the top LRA leadership rejecting all offers to end the conflict, the Ugandan government asked the ICC prosecutor in December 2003 to open an investigation. The evidence he uncovered has now led to the charging of Joseph Kony, the top LRA leader, with 33 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including murder, rape, sexual enslavement, pillaging, ordering attacks against civilians and forcibly conscripting children. Four of his commanders were also charged: Vincent Otti, Okot Odhiambo, Raska Lukwiya and Dominic Ongwen (the last has since been killed in battle).

The indictments were originally drafted in June. But Ugandan mediators

were openly skeptical of the ICC's moves to prosecute, warning that indictments could hamper their peace initiatives. So the indictments were kept sealed for several months to give more time to the ongoing amnesty and reconciliation efforts.

After the indictments were unsealed, Ms. Betty Bigombe, a key mediator, argued that there was "now no hope" of convincing the LRA leaders to surrender. Justice Peter Onega, chairman of the Amnesty Commission, worried that the ranks of the LRA might also fear prosecution. He said that his commission would now shift gears, to "sensitize" the LRA fighters "that the warrant is only for a few people and the rest are free to come back home." ICC officials have pledged to work with local community leaders and the Ugandan government to ensure that the judicial process does not undercut the amnesty programme.

Overall, said Uganda's UN Ambassador Francis Butagira in November, "It is of utmost importance to the people of northern Uganda, as well as the healing of the whole nation, that the leadership of the LRA be tried by the ICC." ■



One of many overcrowded camps for displaced people in Northern Uganda.

Progress in Zimbabwe's HIV/AIDS battle

from page 3

according to the World Bank. But even that, Mr. Dangor said, offers an important lesson. "You do not have to wait for a massive amount of external funding to contain the spread of HIV." As vital as resources for prevention, care and treatment are, he continued, "what is even more important is that countries own both the problem and the solution, instead of the targets and the programmes coming from outside."

The country's struggling AIDS treatment programmes, however, have been particularly affected by the lack of funds. Only 15,000 of an estimated 300,000 Zimbabweans in urgent need of the anti-retroviral drugs (ARVs) that attack the AIDS virus currently have access to them. With little external financing available and foreign currency shortages hampering imports, patient costs have soared, despite government subsidies, from US$7.60 to $50 per month — beyond the means of most.

"AIDS will be with us for many years — maybe forever," Mr. Dangor concluded. "If governments of affected countries, donors and civil society can just remove AIDS from the party political arena, the ideological arena, I think we have a chance of containing this disease much quicker." ■

Traditional healers boost primary health care

from page 11

But with the treatment lasting between six and eight months, many drop out. However, an innovative partnership between medical and traditional practitioners helped reduce the spread through a course that trained healers to supervise and record the doses taken by each patient to ensure proper compliance.

"We were also taught about the symptoms of TB, so that when we pick them up in any of our other patients, we can refer people for a test," said Jack Nyawuza, one of the 25 traditional healers who volunteered in the campaign. "This information added to what we learn in our training as healers." Patients were delighted that the healers received this training: the healers lived nearby and could make home visits when patients were too sick to go to them.

The results were quite remarkable. Overall, 89 per cent of those supervised by traditional healers completed treatment, compared with 67 per cent supervised by other volunteers. And the death rate of traditional healers' patients was two-thirds lower. Healers welcomed their newfound respect within the medical community. "I was trained to help and heal people, so being the TB treatment supervisor is a continuation of my profession," Mr. Nyawuza said.

Many traditional healers are willing to incorporate standards of Western medicine. In Zimbabwe, following a massive government campaign to end practices that could facilitate the spread of HIV, healers condemned using a razor blade, needed to cut the skin when medication must be rubbed into the flesh, on more than one person.

Luckily — since I have a low threshold for pain — the medication Mr. Masango prescribed for me did not call for any cutting. I keep the bitter-sweet red root he prescribed for headaches next to my Imitrex from GlaxoSmithKline. I enjoy the best of both worlds. ■

AFRICA AGENDA

19–23 January 2006, Bamako (Mali) — 2006 World Social Forum. E-mail <espaceforum@afribone.net.ml>, website <www.fsmmali.org>

2–5 February 2006, Segou (Mali) — Second Festival on the Niger, on the theme "Culture and Environment, Tourism and Environment." Organized by the Association of Hotel Owners and Restaurateurs for Tourism. E-mail <info@festivalsegou.org>, website <www.festivalsegou.org>

24–25 February 2006, Ohio (USA) — Women, Gender and Sport in Africa Symposium. Contact Gerard Akindes, tel (740) 597-3207, e-mail <akindesg@ohio.edu>, website <www.ohiou.edu/sportsafrica/womengender/index.htm>

7–9 March 2006, Arusha (Tanzania) — 21st Annual Joint Scientific Conference. This conference is organized by National Institute for Medical Research and will focus on the theme of "Meeting the Millennium Development Goals." Tel (255) 22-212-1400, fax (255) 22-212-1360/212-1380, e-mail <ajsc@nimr.or.tz>

14–18 March 2006, Accra (Ghana) — Global Summit on HIV/AIDS, Traditional Medicine & Indigenous Knowledge. Organized by Africa First (USA), in association with the Ghana Ministry of Health, World Health Organization, UNAIDS and others. Contact J.William Danquah, tel (651) 646 4721, fax (651) 644 3235, e-mail <info@africa-first.com>, website <www.africa-first.com/gsaidstmik2006/default.aspx>

16–12 March 2006, Mexico City (Mexico) — 4th World Water Forum. The theme is "Local Actions for a Global Challenge." Tel (52) 55 51744480, fax (52) 55 51744722, e-mail <worldwaterforum4@can.gob.mx>, website <www.worldwaterforum4.org.mx>

24–26 March 2006, Texas (USA) — Movements, Migrations and Displacements in Africa. Contact Toyin Falola, tel (512) 475 7224, fax (512) 475 7222, e-mail <Toyin.Falola@mail.utexas.edu>, website <www.utexas.edu/conferences/africa/2006/index.htm>

6–8 April 2006, Bergen (Norway) — 7th International Sudan Studies Conference, on the theme "Fifty Years after Independence: Sudan's Quest for Peace, Stability and Identity." Addressing the historic root causes of the conflict is an ongoing process. Organized by the University of Bergen, Sudan Studies Association and Sudan Studies Society of the UK. Website <www.sudan2006.org>

WHAT HAS TAKEN PLACE

13–18 November 2005, Yaoundé (Cameroon) — 4th MIM Pan-African Malaria Conference, on the theme "New Strategies against an Ancient Scourge." The Multilateral Initiative on Malaria (MIM) Pan-African Malaria Conferences are the largest meetings worldwide solely focusing on malaria. Contact Wilfred Mbacham, tel (237) 724 9202, e-mail <mimconference@mim.su.se>, website <www.mim.su.se/conference2005/eng/overview.html>

12–14 December 2005, Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) — Seminar on Destination Management. Organized by the World Tourism Organization. Website <www.world-tourism.org/meetings/eng/meetings.htm>

13–18 December 2005, Hong Kong (China) — Sixth WTO Ministerial Conference. WTO press enquiries, tel: (41-22) 739 50 07 fax: (41-22) 739 54 58, e-mail <enquiries@wto.org>, website <www.wto.org>

AFRICA BOOKS

Africa and Development Challenges in the New Millennium: The NEPAD Debate, eds. J. O. Adesina, Yao Graham and A. Olukoshi (Zed Books, London, UK, 2005; 256 pp; hb £65, $80, pb £18.95, $29.95)

Race against Time by Stephen Lewis (House of Anansi Press Inc, Ontario, Canada, 2005; 208 pp; pb $15.95)

Agir pour l'éducation des filles en Afrique subsaharienne francophone by Vittoria Cavicchioni and Lucila Jallade (L'Harmattan, Paris, France, 2005; 202 pp; pb €17.5)

Women and the Remaking of Politics in Southern Africa: Negotiating Autonomy, Incorporation and Representation by Gisela Geisler (Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, Uppsala, Sweden, 2004; 241 pp; pb $37.50)

Women, Development and the UN: A Sixty-Year Quest for Equality and Justice by Devaki Jain, for the UN Intellectual History Project (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Indiana, USA, 2005; 245 pp; hb $60, pb $22.95)

Le savoir au défi des cultures africaines: former pour changer? ed. Sophia Mappa (Karthala, Paris, France, 2005; 368 pp; pb €25)

Researching Conflict in Africa: Insights and Experiences by Elisabeth Porter et al (UN University Press, Tokyo, Japan, 2005; 190 pp; pb $28)

International Migration, Remittances and the Brain Drain, eds. Maurice Schiff and Çaglar Özden (Palgrave Macmillan, Hampshire, UK, 2005; 288 pp; pb $30)

Negotiating Modernity: Africa's Ambivalent Experience, ed Elisio Salvado Macamo (Zed Books, London, UK, 2005; 256 pp; hb £65, $85, pb £18.95, $29.95)

Intellectuels ivoiriens face à la crise, eds. Idriss Diabaté, Ousmane Dembélé and Francis Akindes (Karthala, Paris, France, 2005; 208 pp; pb €18)

Making States Work: State Failure and the Crisis of Governance, eds. Simon Chesterman, Michael Ignatief and Ramesh Thakur (UN University Press, Tokyo, Japan, 2005; 424 pp; pb $45)

L'Afrique du XXIe siècle by Jacques Bonjawo (Karthala, Paris, France, 2005; 192 pp; pb €18)

Chad: Towards Democratization or Petro-Dictatorship? by Hans Eriksson and Björn Hagström (Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, Uppsala, Sweden, 2005; 81 pp; pb SEK110, €11)

Le drame angolais by André Kisalu Kiala (L'Harmattan, Paris, France, 2005; 314 pp; pb €26.5)

East Africa and the Horn: Confronting Challenges to Good Governance, ed. Dorina A. Bekoe for the International Peace Academy (Lynne Rienner Publishers, Colorado, USA, 2005; 163 pp; pb $14.95)

The Fate of Africa: From the Hopes of Freedom to the Heart of Despair by Martin Meredith (Perseus Publishing, Massachusetts, USA, 2005; 768 pp; hb $35)

Globalization for Development: Trade, Finance, Aid, Migration and Ideas by Ian Goldin and Kenneth Reinert (Palgrave Macmillan, Hampshire, UK, 2005; 328 pp; hb $90)

Les nouvelles régulations de l'économie mondiale by Philippe Hugon and Charles-Albert Michalet (Karthala, Paris, France, 2005; 264 pp; pb €25)

The WTO and Sustainable Development by Gary P. Sampson (UN University Press, Tokyo, Japan, 2005; 330 pp; pb $45)

Going with the Flow: Small-Scale Water Power by Billy Langley and Dan Curtis (Centre for Alternative Technology, UK, 2004; 150 pp; pb £12)

Reclaiming Development: An Alternative Economic Policy Manual by Ha-Joon Chang and Ilene Grabel (Zed Books, London, UK, 2004; 240 pp; hb £32.95, $55, pb £9.99, $17.50)

Quel avenir pour les jeunes de Guinée? ed. Dominique Bangoura (L'Harmattan, Paris, France, 2005; 258 pp; pb €22)

Union Africaine et développement: entre espoirs et illusions by Fattany Billo Talonto (L'Harmattan, Paris, France, 2004; 288 pp; pb €25)

Child Labor in Sub-Saharan Africa by Loretta E. Bass (Lynne Rienner Publishers Colorado, USA, 2004; 213 pp; hb $49.95)

France-Afrique: Echecs et renouveau by Louis Dominici and Francis Dominici (L'Harmattan, Paris, France, 2005; 148 pp; pb €13.5)

Security Sector Reform and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding, eds. Albrecht Schnabel and Hans-Georg Ehrhart (UN University Press, Tokyo, Japan, 2005; 352 pp; pb $40)

AFRICA

IN BRIEF

Information summit pledges help for poor countries

Delegates from 176 countries who met for the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in Tunis, Tunisia, in November pledged to drive the information revolution into poor countries. The meeting, attended by more than 17,000 people, endorsed two documents that largely reaffirmed promises made at the first WSIS summit in Geneva two years ago to increase financing and other assistance to ensure that poor countries benefit from advanced communications technologies.

"It is fitting that this stage of our journey ends here in Tunis, the capital of the country that launched the process," said International Telecommunications Union Secretary-General Yoshio Utsumi. Holding the summit in two phases, with one in an industrial country and the other in a developing one, he said, "helped ensure that the full range of issues of the information society were addressed, while highlighting the critical need to bridge the digital divide."

A voluntary "Digital Solidarity Fund," launched in 2005 at the urging of Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade, was officially recognized by the summit as a means to finance information technologies in Africa. But it remains underfunded, with only about €8 mn so far. The organizers are trying to attract more private sector financing.

The Tunis summit reached an agreement on broadening discussions about regulation of the Internet, an issue that has divided industrial and developing nations. The compromise agreement states that all governments should play an equal role and have equal responsibility for governance of the Internet, while ensuring its continuing stability, security and continuity.

Northern heads of state were notably absent from the summit. Of the 44 who went to Tunis, most were from Africa and only one was from a developed nation, Switzerland. ■

Africa: 'Unprecedented AIDS crisis'

Sub-Saharan Africa remained at the heart of the global HIV/AIDS epidemic in 2005, accounting for two out of every three new infections, four out of every five fatalities and a staggering 90 per cent of all AIDS-related child deaths. Despite a significant jump in the number of Africans on live-saving anti-retroviral drugs during the year, and signs that the rate of new infections is slowing in a few countries (see page 3), said the head of the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) Dr. Peter Piot in December, "AIDS continues to outstrip Africa's efforts to contain it and continues to pose an acute threat to future generations. Africa is still facing an unprecedented AIDS crisis." The region is the world's poorest and contains about 10 per cent of the world's population. ■

HIV/AIDS in Africa, 2005

	Sub-Saharan Africa	World
New infections	3,200,000	4,900,000
Child infections (under 15)	630,000	700,000
Deaths	2,400,000	3,100,000
Child deaths	520,000	570,000
People living with HIV/AIDS	25,800,000	40,300,000

Source: Africa Renewal from WHO and UNAIDS data

NEPAD bioscience networks open shop

Four research hubs have now been set up across Africa to promote the application of the biological sciences to improving African agriculture, health, environment, mining and industry. Establishment of the hubs — located at research institutes in South Africa, Egypt, Kenya and Senegal — was promoted by the African Biosciences Initiative, an undertaking of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

The network for Southern Africa will operate out of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research in South Africa. In collaboration with other research institutes in the region, it will focus on research in human health, animal health and production, plant biotechnologies and environmental rehabilitation. The International Livestock Research Institute in Nairobi, Kenya, will work with researchers across East and Central Africa to improve crop varieties, vaccines and diagnostic tests. The Senegalese Agricultural Research Institute will lead work on agricultural research throughout the Economic Community of West African States. Egypt's National Research Centre is collaborating with research institutes in Algeria, Chad, Libya and Tunisia. ■

UN seeks $4.7 bn in humanitarian aid

The UN issued the largest annual appeal for humanitarian assistance in its history on 30 November. It seeks $4.7 bn in 2006 to assist 31 million people in 26 countries around the world, all but four of them in Africa. An additional $766 mn is still being sought for appeals issued in 2005 but left underfunded, bringing the total request to nearly $5.5 bn.

"The past year has demonstrated our tremendous capacity for giving," Secretary-General Kofi Annan noted, citing the strong charitable response to the Indian Ocean tsunami and the Pakistan earthquake. He called the appeal "an opportunity, which must not be missed, to extend that generosity to people whose plight may not capture the world's attention but whose suffering is no less tragic."

The ongoing humanitarian and political crises in Sudan ($1.5 bn) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo ($1.2 bn) account for more than half of the 2006 request. Funding requests from non-governmental organizations are included for the first time in this year's Consolidated Appeal — so named because it combines requests from many different agencies. "Historically only one-tenth of the Consolidated Appeals have been funded in the first quarter of each year," Mr. Annan observed. "Delayed giving costs more in lives and resources."

AFRICA WATCH

PEACEBUILDING

UN remains in post-war Sierra Leone

Although the UN's six-year peacekeeping mission in Sierra Leone was formally concluded at the end of 2005, the international organization is setting up a new office to help coordinate its on-going efforts to help consolidate the country's fragile peace. At the turn of the year, the UN Integrated Office for Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL) took over the reins from the UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL). Its mandate will be to cement UNAMSIL's gains by helping the government strengthen human rights, improve transparency, assist the next round of elections in 2007 and achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

When UNAMSIL started operations in 1999, its prospects appeared uncertain. A tentative peace agreement was in place between the government and rebel factions, designed to end a civil war that began eight years earlier, but the rebels resumed armed actions in 2000. UNAMSIL soon helped

Peacekeepers helped Sierra Leone get its children back to school.

get the peace process back on track, however, and by 2002 had succeeded in disarming and demobilizing more than 75,000 ex-fighters, including child soldiers. That same year, the mission also helped organize successful presidential and parliamentary elections.

UNAMSIL assisted the voluntary return of more than half a million refugees and displaced people, helped the government restore essential social services, rebuilt schools and health clinics and was instrumental in establishing the Special Court for Sierra Leone, which is trying those responsible for war crimes. The court will continue to operate, and one of the duties of the new UNIOSIL will be to work with other UN missions in West Africa to provide the court with continuing security. ■

APPOINTMENTS

Mr. **Victor da Silva Angelo** *of Portugal, previously the UN's humanitarian aid coordinator and UN Development Programme resident representative in Sierra Leone, has been appointed by the UN Secretary-General to head the newly established UN Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL), which took over on 1 January from the UN peacekeeping mission (see article, above). He has also served with the UN in the Central African Republic, Gambia, São Tomé and Príncipe, Tanzania and Zimbabwe, and as special envoy for East Timor and Asia.*

The UN Secretary-General has appointed Mr. **Peter van Walsum** *of the Netherlands as his personal envoy for Western Sahara. Mr. van Walsum has represented his country at the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the European Commission and the UN. As a member of the UN Security Council, he chaired the Iraq Sanctions Committee from 1999 to 2000.*

Mr. **Francesco Bastagli** *of Italy has been appointed by the UN Secretary-General as his special representative for Western Sahara. Just prior to his appointment, Mr. Bastagli served for three years in Kosovo as deputy special representative for civil administration. He has worked for the UN since 1974 in a variety of positions in the Secretariat and with the UN High Commission for Refugees and the UN Development Programme.*

GENITAL CUTTING

Legislators call for end to harmful practice

Declaring that female circumcision, also known as female genital mutilation or cutting (FGM/C), is "harmful, irreversible, and sometimes fatal," parliamentarians from 20 African countries plus the UK have pledged to step up efforts to eliminate the practice. A 4–5 December conference in Dakar, sponsored by Senegal's National Assembly and the African Parliamentary Union, emphasized education, rather than criminal penalties, in shaping a "multidisciplinary" response to the tradition. "The abandonment of FGM/C," the final declaration noted, "can be achieved only as a result of a comprehensive movement" involving the entire society.

The parliamentarians stressed that "there is no religious justification" for FGM/C. They also emphasized that traditional beliefs, while important, must adapt. "Culture is not immutable," the group asserted, and "changes when the dangers of harmful practices are understood." For this reason, the legislators called on traditional and religious leaders, educators, doctors and elected officials to lead the campaign. Legislation can be important symbolically and as an educational tool, the declaration noted, and should be drawn up in conjunction with traditional and civil society leaders. Although genital cutting is performed on 3 million African girls annually, the conference asserted that the practice could be eradicated within a single generation. ■

CULTURAL TRADE

Africa lags in global culture market

Africa accounts for less than 1 per cent of global trade in cultural products such as books, compact discs, video games and sculptures, reports the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). And the continent has not shown any progress in capturing a larger share of the market over the last decade, notes a report released in December, *International Flows of Selected Cultural Goods and Services, 1994–2003*.

Overall, international trade in cultural goods increased from $38 bn to $60 bn annually between 1994 and 2002, reports UNESCO. Just three countries — the UK, US and China — produced 40 per cent of the world's cultural trade products in 2002.

While globalization provides openings for countries to share their cultures and creative talents, "it is clear that not all nations are able to take advantage of this opportunity," said UNESCO Director-General Koïchiro Matsuura. "Without support to help these countries participate in this trade, their cultural voices will remain marginalized and isolated." ■